

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 L-03 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 OMB-01

SAM-01 SAB-01 /043 W

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R 121515Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 596

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1841

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT IS

SUBJ: MAPAM POSITION ON QADOUM SETTLERS

REF: TEL AVIV 1806

SUMMARY: THE MAPAM LEADERSHIP IS EXERTING PRESSURE ON RABIN TO EVACUATE THE QADOUM SETTLERS ON THE DUAL GROUNDS THAT THEIR PRESENCE IS ILLEGAL AND THAT IT IS AGAINST ISRAEL'S INTEREST TO HAVE ANY SETTLEMENTS IN SAMARIA. WITH STRONG PRESSURES WITHIN THE MAPAM RANK AND FILE TO BREAK UP THE ALIGNMENT WITH THE LABOR PARTY AT THE JUNE CONVENTION, RABIN'S HANDLING OF QADOUM IS SEEN AS AN IMPORTANT TEST OF THE PARTNERSHIP. NRP THREATS OF A CABINET CRISIS IF SETTLERS ARE EVACUATED HAS STIFFENED MAPAM'S OPPOSITION TO A COMPROMISE SOLUTION. END SUMMARY.

1. THE POSITION OF MAPAM ON THE SETTLEMENT AT QADOUM REPRESENTS A LOGICAL EXTENSION OF ITS OVERALL POSITION ON SETTLEMENTS. MAPAM FAVORS SETTLEMENTS IN CERTAIN PARTS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, NOTABLY THE GOLAN HEIGHTS AND JORDAN VALLEY, BUT IT IS TOTALLY OPPOSED TO SETTLEMENTS NOT INITIATED BY THE
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GOVERNMENT AND TO SETTLEMENTS IN SAMARIA. IN THE CASE OF QADOUM,

THE TWO MAPAM MINISTERS (SHEMTOV AND ROSEN) IN DECEMBER INSISTED INITIALLY THAT THE SEBASTIA SETTLERS SHOULD BE EVACUATED WITHOUT ANY COMPROMISE, BUT THEY THEREAFTER AGREED TO THE TRANSFER OF THE SETTLERS TO A NEARBY MILITARY CAMP PENDING A CABINET DECISION WITHIN 3 MONTHS ON THEIR FUTURE.

2. NOW THAT THE THREE MONTHS HAVE ELAPSED, MAPAM IS EXERTING PRESSURE ON RABIN TO REACH A DECISION FORCING THE QADOUM SETTLERS OUT. AL HAMISHMAR EDITORIAL MARCH 12, DEALING WITH THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY'S OPPOSITION TO THE EVACUATION (SEE TEL AVIV 1806), WRITES THAT "IT SEEMS THAT IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE TO REFRAIN FROM A CLEAR-CUT DECISION ON THE QADOUM SETTLEMENT AND ON WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS IN GENERAL. THE SETTLEMENT IN QADOUM WAS NOT ONLY CONTRARY TO THE GOI'S DECISION AND COMPLETELY DISREGARDED IT, BUT IT WAS ALSO CONTRARY TO THE POLITICAL INTERESTS OF ISRAEL. IT CANNOT BE ACCEPTED THAT 'A FACT' WAS CREATED, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE PRIMIN HAS SPECIFICALLY ANNOUNCED THAT A DEBATE ON THE SETTLEMENTS WOULD BE HELD IN CABINET WITHIN THREE MONTHS... THIS PROMISE MUST BE FULFILLED REGARDLESS OF THREATS BY NRP LEADERS...."

3. MAPAM LEADERS HAVE COME OUT STRONGLY IN RECENT DAYS AGAINST THE NRP ON THE QADOUM ISSUE. HEALTH MINISTER SHEMTOV, ACCORDING TO PRESS, SAID MARCH 11 THAT "THE ATTEMPT BY NRP CIRCLES TO SUBMIT AN ULTIMATUM TO THE GOVERNMENT ON QADOUM MUST BE REJECTED FIRMLY...." MAPAM POLITICAL SECRETARY NAFTALI FEDER SAID THAT "THE NRP IS TRYING TO SOLVE ITS INTERNAL PROBLEMS BY MAKING IDLE THREATS TO BREAK UP THE COALITION...IF THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO MAINTAIN ITS CREDIBILITY AND IMAGE IT MUST EVACUATE QADOUM, EVEN IF IT RESULTS IN THE RESIGNATION OF MINISTER HAMMER FROM THE GOVERNMENT...."

4. ALTHOUGH ALL SECTORS OF MAPAM ARE OPPOSED TO THE ILLEGAL SETTLEMENT IN QADOUM, THE MORE RADICAL GROUPS--E.G., ITS YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS--REGARD RABIN'S HANDLING OF THE QADOUM ISSUE AS A SIGNIFICANT TEST CASE FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE ALIGNMENT PARTNERSHIP. THERE ARE ALREADY STRONG VOICES IN MAPAM (ESTIMATES RUN FROM A THIRD TO A MAJORITY) WHICH ADVOCATE THE BREAKUP OF THE ALIGNMENT AND THE PRESENTATION OF A SEPARATE MAPAM LIST IN THE NEXT ELECTION. THESE GROUPS CLAIM THAT THE PRESENT LABOR PARTY

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LEADERSHIP IS CARRYING OUT POLICIES WHICH ARE CONTRARY TO MAPAM IDEOLOGY AND PRINCIPLES. SOME LEADERS, SUCH AS SEC GEN MEIR TALOI, MR DOV ZAKIN, AND OLD TIME HEADS YAACOV HAZAN AND MEIR YAARI, WHILE ALSO EXPRESSING DISAPPOINTMENT AT VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE PARTNERSHIP WITH LABOR PARTY, APPEAL FOR PATIENCE AND REQUEST THEIR MORE RADICAL COLLEAGUES NOT TO BREAT THE PARTNERSHIP. HOWEVER, EVEN THEY WILL FIND IT HARD TO ARGUE FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE ALIGNMENT IF THE GOVERNMENT

DOES NOT ACT FIRMLY AGAINST THE QADOUM SETTLERS.

5. WHILE A CABINET DECISION TO EVACUATE THE QADOUM SETTLERS WILL NOT GUARANTEE THE CONTINUATION OF THE ALIGNMENT PARTNERSHIP, A DECISION TO ALLOW THEM TO STAY THUS MAY WELL RESULT IN BREAKING UP THE ALIGNMENT. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, TALMI TOLD RABIN THIS WEEK THAT UNLESS THE LABOR PARTY ENTERS INTO SERIOUS CONSULTATIONS WITH MAPAM ON A CLEAR POLITICAL PROGRAM, SUCH A BREAK MAY BE UNAVOIDABLE. SHEMTOV MADE A SIMILAR ASSESSMENT IN A PRIME TIME RADIO INTERVIEW. FOR MANY MAPAMNIKS QADOUM HAS BECOME ACID TEST OF WHERE RABIN IS GOING.

6. COMMENT: WHILE SOME OBSERVERS THINK THAT MAPAM MAY BE FORCED TO SWALLOW ONE MORE COMPROMISE, IT SEEMS TO US THAT THE MAPAM LEADERSHIP MORE THAN IN THE PAST HAS NOW TAKEN A PUBLIC STAND WHICH IT WILL BE VERY HARD FOR IT TO BACK AWAY FROM. RABIN THUS FINDS HIMSELF BETWEEN THE SCYLLA OF MAPAM AND CHARYBDIS OF THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY WITH NEITHER SIDE PREPARED TO GIVE HIM MUCH MANEUVERING ROOM.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LAND SETTLEMENT, POLICIES, SQUATTERS, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, DISSIDENT FACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TELAV01841
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760096-0161
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760364/aaaaceuw.tel
Line Count: 135
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 TEL AVIV 1806
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <04 OCT 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MAPAM POSITION ON QADOUM SETTLERS
TAGS: PINT, IS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006